

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PORT O 01270 01 OF 02 121724Z
ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-14 SSO-00 ARAE-00 /021 W
-----121730Z 065724 /40
O 111615Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT OF SPAIN 1270

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FOR ARA AND S/S ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, TD
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE SECRETARY TO TRINIDAD

REF: (A) TUMMINIA/RICH PHONE CON MAY 10
(B) PORT OF SPAIN 1239

SUMMARY. POSSIBILITY FOR SECRETARY TO STOP OVER IN
TRINIDAD DURING OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY TRIP IS OPPORTUNITY
FOR SIGNIFICANT DIALOGUE WITH LEADERSHIP OF THIS IMPORTANT
AND PRAGMATIC CARIBBEAN COUNTRY. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER,
PROSPECTS FOR MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER DR. ERIC
WILLIAMS ARE NO BETTER THAN EVEN AT THIS TIME, AND
WITHOUT SUCH MEETING THE VISIT WOULD BECOME LITTLE MORE
THAN CONVENIENCE STOPOVER AND PERHAPS EVEN BE A
NEGATIVE EVENT. I RECOMMEND THAT WE DIRECTLY EXPLORE
POSSIBILITY WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO (GOTT), BUT THAT IF NEITHER PRIME MINISTER NOR
FOREIGN MINISTER CAN MEET WITH THE SECRETARY, THEN
STOPOVER SHOULD BE MADE ELSEWHERE. FULL BACKGROUND
FOR THIS UNFORTUNATELY EQUIVOCAL READING OF THE SITUATION
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FOLLOWS. END SUMMARY

1. PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS IS IN THE RECLUSE
PHASE OF HIS CYCLICAL BEHAVIOR PATTERN. FOR SOME TIME
HE HAS APPEARED OUT OF HIS RESIDENCE ONLY FOR THE
WEEKLY CABINET MEETING AND A WEEKLY APPEARANCE IN
PARLIAMENT, AND DURING THE LATTER HE DOES NOT TAKE

ACTIVE PART. SENIOR MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT HAVE INFORMED ME THAT THEY SIMPLY CANNOT NOW GET TO SEE HIM ON ANY ISSUE EXCEPT AT THE FORMAL CABINET MEETING. ONE OF HIS CLOSE STAFF MEMBERS CONFIDED TO ME THAT MILLIAMS HAS NOT EVEN APPEARED AT HIS OFFICE ("WHITEHALL") FOR WEEKS. HE IS REPORTEDLY WRITING ANOTHER BOOK, BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON HE IS HIGHLY INACCESSIBLE WHEN HE GETS INTO THESE PHASES AND THE SITUATION MAY REMAIN THIS WAY FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

2. LORD THOMSON CAME TO TRINIDAD LAST WEEK AS THE PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF UK PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN WITH THE EXPECTATION OF MEETING WITH WILLIAMS ON COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT ISSUES AND RHODESIA IN PARTICULAR. WILLIAMS DID NOT RECEIVE HIM.

3. WHEN I DISCUSSED WITH FOREIGN MINISTER DONALDSON LAST WEEK HIS OWN PLANS FOR JUNE (REF B), I SPECIFICALLY HAD IN MIND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SECRETARY MIGHT BE ABLE TO VISIT TRINIDAD IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRENADA OAS CONFERENCE. I EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO NOTE TO DONALDSON THAT I WAS ESPECIALLY INTERESTED WHETHER HE MIGHT BE AVAILABLE IN VIEW OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT A VERY SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION MIGHT BE ABLE TO COME TO TRINIDAD IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRENADA MEETING. SINCE I WAS WITHOUT MY INSTRUCTIONS, I DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION THE SECRETARY, BUT DONALDSON CAUGHT THE IMPLICATION OF MY INQUIRY. HIS RESPONSE WAS UNEQUIVOCAL. HE WILL NOT BE IN THE
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COUNTRY, BUT EXPECTS TO BE IN LONDON FOR MOST OF JUNE AT THE COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT AND SILVER JUBILEE GATHERINGS.

4. IF THE SECRETARY IS ABLE TO VISIT, SOME MEMBERS OF THE CABINET WILL OF COURSE RECEIVE HIM, BUT GIVEN THE TIGHT REIN WITH WHICH WILLIAMS CONTROLS THE GOVERNMENT, NO OTHER MINISTER IS LIKELY TO BE FREE TO SPEAK WITH ANY BREADTH OR FRANKNESS OF REGIONAL PROBLEMS, TRINIDADIAN PLANS, OR WIDER CONCERNS.

5. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT DURING 1976 THE GOTT DIRECTLY REJECTED PROPOSED STOPOVER HERE BY SECRETARY KISSINGER, TURNED DOWN PROSPECT OF HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATIONS ON CUBAN EXILE TERRORISM, AND REJECTED A UNITAS FLEET VISIT. MORE RECENTLY, A NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE FIELD TRIP STUDY VISIT WAS REJECTED.

6. THESE EVENTS, HOWEVER, HAVE NOT BEEN INDICATIVE OF ANY HOSTILITY, AS THEY MIGHT INDEED REPRESENT IN MANY COUNTRIES. WHETHER WE AGREE WITH THE TRINIDAD GOVERNMENT'S ANALYSIS OR NOT, ERIC WILLIAMS AND HIS KEY COLLEAGUES ARE STILL REACTING TO THE EMERGENCE ON THE POLITICAL SCENE HERE OF A LEFTIST, UNION-BASED POLITICAL OPPOSITION COALITION LAST YEAR. THE LOCAL ESTABLISHMENT'S ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IS THAT FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS THEY ARE IN A CRITICAL STRUGGLE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF PRAGMATIC GOVERNMENT AND AN OPEN, MIXED ECONOMIC SYSTEM IN THE FACE OF THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE FORCES OF DARKNESS. THE VERY FACT THAT THE USG SEEMS A NATURAL ALLY IN THIS POLITICAL EQUATION MAKES ERIC WILLIAMS DOUBLY WARY. HE FEELS THAT ANY OVERT IDENTIFICATION WITH THE USG OR ANY EVIDENCE WHICH CAN BE UTILIZED BY HIS FOES TO LABEL THE TRINIDAD GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AS MADE SECRET

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IN WASHINGTON WILL HURT, NOT HELP, HIS PARTY'S SURVIVAL (AND IN THEIR MINDS THE SURVIVAL OF FREE ENTERPRISE AND SOUND GROWTH POLICIES).

7. WE ARE THUS FACED WITH THE ANOMALY THAT OUR VERY CONGRUENCE OF PERSPECTIVES IN THE CARIBBEAN AND IN GOVERNMENTAL PHILOSOPHY HAS RESULTED IN FAR LESS CONTACT AND DIALOGUE THAN EXISTS BETWEEN OURSELVES AND FAR LESS HEALTHY GOVERNMENTS IN JAMAICA AND GUYANA. PARTLY, AT LEAST, I BELIEVE THE GOTT EVALUATION IS ACCURATE. IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN FIERCE PRIDE AND THE OVERHANG OF HISTORICAL INTERVENTIONIST USG POLICIES IN THE CARIBBEAN, THE GOTT'S CLEAR INDEPENDENCE OF WASHINGTON TUTELAGE IS PROBABLY THE BEST INSURANCE THAT OUR OWN GOALS AND INTERESTS HERE WILL BE BEST SERVED. HOWEVER, I DO DISAGREE DIRECTLY WITH SOME OF THE RECENT MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS ATTITUDE AND CONSIDER THAT GREATER DIALOGUE IS IN THE INTERESTS OF BOTH COUNTRIES WITHOUT COMPROMISING ANYONE'S INDEPENDENCE.
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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-14 SSO-00 ARAE-00 /021 W
-----121730Z 053886 /42

O 111630Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 656

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT OF SPAIN 1270

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8. IN 1976 IT APPEARED THAT THE ULTRA CAUTION SHOWN BY THE GOTT IN CONTACTS WITH THE USG WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS HERE, ALSO SUPPORTED BY ERIC WILLIAMS' STRONG AND HIGHLY PERSONAL REACTION TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ELECTION-YEAR PSYCHOLOGY HAS PERSISTED FOR THE TOP GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP. THE SOLID OPPOSITION SHOWING IN 1976 AT THE POLLS, RECONFIRMED LAST MONTH BY LOCAL ELECTIONS WHICH INDICATED THE OPPOSITION BASE WAS NOT AN EPHEMERAL PHENOMENON, HAS PERPETUATED A HIGHLY POLITICIZED REACTION TO ALL SITUATIONS AND THE EVALUATION OF EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE IN TERMS OF ITS PERCEIVED EXPLOITABILITY BY THE MORE IDEOLOGICALLY-ORIENTED POLITICAL OPPOSITION.

9. THE ATTITUDES AND TRENDS NOTED ABOVE ARE NOW FAIRLY DEEPLY IMBEDDED INTO THE REACTION PATTERN OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP HERE. IN TIME, IT WILL MODERATE. MEANWHILE, A MOST HIGHLY USEFUL DIALOGUE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER COULD STILL TAKE PLACE AS IT DID IN 1975 IF HE EMERGES FROM HIS RECLUSE
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PERIOD INTO THE ACTIVIST, EXTROVERT AND DYNAMIC PERIOD OF HIS BEHAVIOR CYCLE.

10. MY OWN RECOMMENDATION IS THAT I BE AUTHORIZED DIRECTLY TO EXPLORE WHETHER EITHER WILLIAMS OR DONALDSON WOULD BE PREPARED TO RECEIVE THE SECRETARY AT THE TIME OF THE OAS TRIP. IF EITHER WILL MAKE HIMSELF AVAILABLE, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD GO FORWARD WITH THE PROPOSED VISIT. THIS IS CLEARLY AN

IMPORTANT CARIBBEAN NATION TO WHOM WE SHOULD PAY SOME PUBLIC RECOGNITION, AND THIS IS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR NEW ADMINISTRATION. MRS. ARTER IS VISITING KINGSTON, AND BOTH JAMAICAN AND GUYANESE FOREIGN MINISTERS HAVE CONSULTED IN WASHINGTON.

11. IF NEITHER WILLIAMS NOR DONALDSON IS PREPARED TO MAKE HIMSELF AVAILABLE IN RESPONSE TO OUR PRIVATE INQUIRY, HOWEVER, I RECOMMEND AGAINST STOPPING HERE. WHILE OTHERS IN THE CARIBBEAN WILL WONDER WHY ATTENTION IS PAID TO BARBADOS (AS THE PROBABLE ALTERNATIVE OVERNIGHT POINT) INSTEAD OF THE POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY MORE IMPORTANT TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, AT LEAST ERIC WILLIAMS WILL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THAT IS SIGNIFICANT. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE GOTT WOULD COMPLETELY REJECT A VISIT AS WAS DONE LAST YEAR, BUT EVEN THEN IT WOULD BE DONE PRIVATELY AND THE GOTT DOES NOT MAKE SUCH MATTERS PUBLIC. I SINCERELY HOPE A MEETING WITH WILLIAMS CAN BE ARRANGED, BUT IF NOT, WE SHOULD BE UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARED NOT TO ACT HURT OR DISAPPOINTED. IT WILL BE BETTER NOT TO COME HERE AT ALL IF THE SECRETARY CAN MEET WITH NEITHER WILLIAMS NOR DONALDSON, HOWEVER, SINCE THIS WILL BE VIEWED THROUGHOUT THE AREA AS A SNUB TO THE USG AND THERE WILL BE THOSE BOTH IN TRINIDAD AND ELSEWHERE WHO WILL TAKE SATISFACTION IN SUCH A THOUGHT.

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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